



September, 1987

\$1.25

**SUBURBAN CHICAGO ATARIANS**

AN INDEPENDENT COMPUTER USERS' GROUP

FLASH FLASH FLASH FLASH

# Notice

The September  
meeting will be  
held at the  
**Roselle**  
**Library**

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

It's back to school time. As Ron Rogers pointed out in one of his essays last year (I miss those, Ron), it will now be a little easier for the rest of us to get online with our favorite Bulletin Board Systems. It's not quite "Back To School" time for SCAT, though. The College of DuPage needs the rooms we usually use for their various registration activities so we have to meet elsewhere for our September 5th meeting.

We were scheduled to meet in the Carol Stream Public Library (like last month), however we got a letter denying our use of it for a second time. They felt that our August meeting was not providing a sharing and exchange of information that was of interest to the residents of Carol Stream. One of the library staff observed only the pre-meeting activity, when our dealers do most of their business, and felt this an inappropriate use of their room. Unfortunately, they did not witness any of our presentations.

One other thing about the August meeting that even disturbed me is that one of the dealers was selling in front of the library on the sidewalk. This was inexcusable and will not be tolerated at any SCAT function. By the way, the library people were very PLEASED with the condition of the room when the meeting was over. They said we left it in better shape than the Brownies and Boy Scouts. Hmmm, is that a compliment or what?

However justified or trivial we may feel their reasons were, we will not be using the Carol Stream Library for the September meeting. Instead, we will be returning to one of SCAT's original stomping grounds. The Roselle Public Library (Community Rooms A & B) will be the site of our September meeting. As usual, the meeting will begin at 11:00am. If you need directions, call the SCAT officer closest to you (see the list on the inside back cover).

Backtracking to the August meeting, I would like to express my appreciation for the wonderful effort put forth by SCAT Vice-President Ken Reid. Ken had to take over the meeting at the proverbial last minute, due to car problems I encountered while on the way to the meeting. I've been in that situation myself and it can be a little scary, but from all reports I've received, Ken did a great job.

Some news from Atari...Atari spokesman, Neil Harris, announced some prices for the Mega ST computers during a formal conference on GENie that took place on August 5th. As you may already know, Atari has decided that the Mega ST 1 would be too similar to the 1040ST in features so the Mega ST line will come in only 2 and 4 megabyte versions. The prices announced for the Mega ST 2 were \$1699 w/monochrome monitor, and \$1899 w/RGB monitor. The Mega ST 4 will go for

\$2399 w/mon and \$2599 w/RGB. Neil Harris pointed out three things about these prices: 1) These are the planned price as of TODAY (8/5/87)...they are subject to change by the time they get to market. 2) These prices reflect a better dealer margin (more on this later). 3) These are LIST prices. Dealers may discount these, as they do the Atari 1040ST, whose actual list price is \$1099, but is discounted by most dealers.

Which dealers will be carrying the Mega ST computer systems? Atari has not yet finalized the dealer requirements, but two issues that they seem pretty firm about are no Mega ST systems will be sold by mail order businesses and that any dealer carrying the Mega ST line must have an outgoing sales force. This doesn't mean they have to be extremely personable. It means that they must actually make sales calls on small businesses. They feel if they are going to have any chance of gaining the confidence of the small businesses, they will have to assure them the kind of support that IBM and Apple dealers have traditionally supplied (with varying degrees of success).

These announcements have stirred up a minor controversy on the GENie message bases. One particular individual feels deeply pained and betrayed by Atari Corporation over the Mega ST prices. Based on previous guess-timates of Mega ST prices, he planned to buy a Mega ST but now cannot. He gone so far as to call Atari a bunch of liars. This brings up an issue I would like to comment on.

There are a lot of businesses out there, which include the likes of Atari, Apple, IBM, General Motors, Beatrice, and many, many more who are constantly studying their respective markets and developing products to feed those markets. They must have autonomy to make whatever changes to the product, its pricing, and its availability at any time between the product's inception to its release to the public that they feel is necessary. What too many people don't realize is that until a product is actually on a shelf in a dealer's showroom, the product does not exist. It's just so much vaporware. Vaporware has no price, it has no features, and it stands every chance of never seeing the light of day. So anything quoted by magazines, newsletters, and company spokesmen about upcoming products are subject to change. It's not a matter of lying, it's a fundamental fact of life.

My advice to that troubled individual was to keep using his 520ST or 1040ST, which still remain exceptional values for the power they provide. With 3rd party expansions and the eventual release of the Blitter chip (fingers are crossed), the 520/1040ST systems can be beefed up to Mega ST levels, if that is necessary for his computing needs. In the future, don't build houses on sand.



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#### New ST Titles

"Sub-Battle" from Epyx, "Goldrunner" from Michtron, "Scenery disk #7" for "Flight Simulator II", "ST-Wars", "Fleet Street Publisher", "Stereo CAD 3-D 2.0" with the Stereo-Tek 3-D glasses, "Midway Battles", "Stuff" from Michtron, "X-Rated Graphics" for Printmaster+, "Alice Personal Pascal", "Mad-Libs", "M-Cache" and "Logistix".

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#### New 8 bit Software

"AwardWare", "Technicolor Dream" a 256 color graphic art program, "Pirates of the Barbary Coast", "Midway Battles", "Freaky Factory", "Laser Hawk", "Guderian", "Rocket Repair Man", "Guitar Wizard", "Phantastic", "Autodeal", "Hollywood Hijinx", "221-B Baker St.", "News Station" and "Money Spin"

All software is discounted, user group members with valid I.D. receive a 20% discount off the retail price of software.



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### NEWS FROM ATARI:

(News from Neil Harris)

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The Mega ST and the SX212 modem are at the last step before arriving. We have received pre-production samples. These are the first units off the line with all the same components, packaging, and production techniques as the real thing. We get a small number of these to test and make sure there are no last-minute glitches. When we give the go-ahead, the next step is real production.

The Atari PC is looking likely for later this Summer. The XEP-80 (for the 8-bits) is waiting on one part which turned out to have an incredibly long lead time on orders -- once we have the part we'll turn these around ASAP. The SLM804 Laser Printer is waiting on one final component also, as well as the final version of the software drivers that support it.

New software from Atari includes the first titles in the Arrakis Advantage series of middle-school-level educational programs. There will be 17 in total, of which 4 have hit the stores already and the rest are in various stages of finalization.

Shortly after the SX212 modem hits, we will release an add-on package for 8-bit owners which is to contain an SID cable and the program SX EXPRESS by Keith Ledbetter, as well as the new handler file. Of course, SX212 owners with the 8-bits can also use it through the 850 interface using existing terminal programs set up for Hayes-compatible modems.

The blitter chip is working and is in the pre-production Mega ST's mentioned above. The AMY chip is still in development, and may still see the light of day -- some day. AMY is a stubborn beast.

Speaking of stubborn, Microsoft Write is also still in development. Nearly finished now, too, although a few small bugs remain to be expunged.

**SHOW NEWS:** Atari made history by becoming the first computer manufacturer to exhibit at NAMM, the National Association of Music Merchants show in Chicago. The ST was present throughout the show in virtually every booth where there were MIDI instruments. Atari sales people at the show were besieged by music dealers eager to sign up as Atari dealers. By the time this 4-day event was over, there were literally hundreds of dealer applications waiting to be approved. Before NAMM, Atari had 50 music stores as dealers -- it looks like there will be 250 when the new dealers are selected.

In other news from NAMM, Keyboard magazine announced the results of its latest reader survey. The Atari ST computer has rocketed into the #1 slot in the vital "Intent-to-buy" category ahead of perennial leader Macintosh! The word in Atari HQ is "Today MIDI -- tomorrow, Desktop Publishing!"

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### Championship "Ripoff"

Championship Baseball from Activision

By: John Parchem

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Back in 1984, I bought a product from a company called Gamestar. Its name was "Star-League" baseball. From the moment I booted the game up, it became my most beloved piece of entertainment software. Nothing for the ST, or the 8-bits, have yet removed it from its top spot in my software library. It had everything you could want! Sound effects included sounds made from catching the ball, hitting it, and even crowd cheers! Music played between innings, simulated scores updated you from teams around the League, music always played between innings, and it had a VERY enjoyable atmosphere. Maybe you can understand the excitement I felt when I heard that they (Gamestar - now owned by Activision) were releasing a sequel to Star-League based on the original. I flipped! Great! Activision is taking a supreme hit on the 8-bits, and is porting it over to the ST where the program can exploit the ST's higher graphics, more memory, and advanced CPU. I was one of the first prepaid customers to order this program.

When it finally arrived, I booted it up immediately. I was so anxious to see what this sequel would be like, and how they made it better. I seen the credits appear from the authors, and recognized one author as the writer of the original version. "This is it!", I thought to myself.

What I found was an evolutionary step BACKWARDS in the software industry. The game Championship Baseball, the successor to Star-League, ranks MANY RANKS BELOW THE ORIGINAL. There is no MUSIC, crowd cheers are so poor they sound like our rocket engines in Space Invaders, even poorer graphics, and a higher price tag make this program one you really won't want to spend your \$39 on. I am disgusted with the product, and I intend to let Activision know about it too. Who knows, maybe they never saw the original. In any case, it just goes to show you that even advanced technology isn't the answer to a happy computer owner in this case. Star League Baseball continues to hold the top seat in my software library.



**Remember to renew  
your membership**

## Customizing AUTORUN.SYS

By Ron Hamilton

Reprinted from the newsletter of ICCC, Mattoon, IL.

Part of the "boot" process with the Atari DOS 2.0 and 2.5 is an attempt to locate, load, and execute a file named "AUTORUN.SYS". This can be any machine language object code file with an appended execution address.

DOS.SYS contains the specified file in ATASCII form at address \$170C to \$1719 (5900-5913). The default file is "D1:AUTORUN.SYS". You can see this with the following BASIC code:

```
10 FOR I=5900 TO 5913:PRINT CHR$(PEEK(I));:NEXT I
```

You can, of course, POKE anything that you like into these addresses and add a custom touch to your DOS. It is even conceivable to make your DOS look for something like "D2:MYFILE.OBJ", which would make your DOS totally useless on a one drive system. My personal DOS is modified only slightly to look for "D1:A?????.SYS"; the wild cards take up the same memory space as the default and will also accept the stock file name.

The utility is the fact that I can use any seven

characters between the "A" and the ".SYS" to describe myfile and have some idea what the particular AUTORUN.SYS does. I have "ARUNMENU.SYS", "AGCOLDN.SYS", etc. You may have others that would make a directory listing much more informative. Here is how to do it:

```
10 DIM F$(14):F$="D1:A?????.SYS"
20 FOR I=1 TO 14
30 POKE 5899+I,ASC(F$(I,I))
40 NEXT I
50 OPEN #1,8,0,"D:DOS.SYS"
60 END
```

The OPEN command in line 50 will write the DOS.SYS file to a disk in drive 1, so you do not have to go to DUP.SYS and manually write the DOS file with option "H". Either way, you must write the new DOS.SYS to the disk before you can boot your system with it.

The END in line 60 forces BASIC to close all open IOCB's (Input-Output Control Blocks). Obviously, you can define F\$ to be whatever you like in line 10. But give some careful thought before you go POKEing around.

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Atari Corporation Speaks!  
GEnie Atari ST Roundtable: Formal Conference of 8/5/87

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To sign up for GEnie service, call (with modem) 800-638-8369. Upon connection type HHH (no RETURN after that). Wait for the U# prompt. Type XJM11877,GEnie and hit RETURN. The system will prompt you for your information, and GEnie will call within a few days with your signon information.

<NHARRIS> First, the ground rules tonight. The Atari folks will introduce themselves, then we'll talk for a short bit. Then the floor will be made available for questions. Since you all know me already, we'll move right to one of the newest Atari people on GEnie, Julius Oklaacak. Please say hello, Julius.

<[Julius] J.OKLAMCAK> Hi guys! First, let me say hello to my 'friends' in Sunnyvale...I work for Atari Canada, and have yet to meet any of these people face to face, though, I have 'met' them over the phone (at least some of them!).

<NHARRIS> Among other things, Julius sysops the Atari Canada BBS and also provides support on CIS -- and now here, of course. Next, the software twins, Mark Jansen and Cary Gee. Guys?

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> Hi folks! Cary is a Programmer here in the Atari R&D department and I am the West Coast Editor of Atari Explorer. (Of course, Leonard reminds me that I'm actually Technical Documentation person for the Atari R&D Department...he's right, of course! :-) ...but enough about us!

<NHARRIS> Thanks. Next we have Jim Tittsler, ace hardware engineer and star of Best of BIX. Jim?

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> Good evening. I am a hardware person that found out that software is more interesting :-) and have since been captured by the hardware group anyway. I was one of the ST design team, and lately the PC project (among other things :-). And you will note I am MUCH more careful about what I am quoted as saying in BIX! Thanks.

<NHARRIS> That's why you're an engineer and I'm only in marketing. Next we have Darryl May. Go ahead, Darryl.

<[Darryl@ATARI] DMAY> Well I just work in Technical Support department answering all your phone calls and letter that come in here.

<NHARRIS> One more member of the team, an honorary member not on the payroll, is Fred Beckman from the Atari Base BBS. Fred?

<FREDBECKMAN> Yes I have the honor of helping on the ATARI BASE BBS. This keeps us all working many hours on all five line. I pass on information from the BBS to Neil and others as indicated. Back to Neil ->

<NHARRIS> All right. Now that you know who we are we'll get started.

<[Mike Ferrara] MIFERRA> I have ONE question! Where's the BLITTER??!!? A lot of us in New York are getting SOOO impatient!

<NHARRIS> Well, they seem to be coming in the Mega ST's -- there's one on Darryl's desk and another on Mark's. Do any of you folks know when it's coming as an upgrade? Jim?

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> I'm not certain.

<[Darryl@ATARI] DMAY> My Mega with Blitter is running right now.

<NHARRIS> OK, we'll keep you posted on that one.

<[Andy Eddy] KIDX> Two quick ones: Has the Mega pricing been set? And what effect will the new Tandy PC-comps have on the Atari PC strategy?

<NHARRIS> Yes, we've set the retail pricing on the Mega ST\* computers. The Mega ST2 will sell for \$1699 with Monochrome, \$1899 with RGB. The Mega ST4 is \$2399 with mono, \$2599 with color. Please keep some things in mind regarding these prices -- 1. they are suggested list -- 2. we're improving dealer margins, so the numbers may seem a little high now -- 3. These are the numbers today. I really can't comment on the new Tandy systems until I know more about them. Jim, have you looked into them?

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> I have only heard the description via the San Jose Mercury News, Neil. The pricing seemed better than their old pricing, but still not incredibly aggressive. I still think for an EGA/serial/parallel machine the PC is a good deal.

<[Julius] J.OKLAMCAK> (yup!)

<BEERYSBIT> Just a quick question: when will we see the Megas in stores?

<NHARRIS> I am not sure how good an answer you can get on

that one yet. We're in the process of figuring out the requirements for dealers to get the Megas and Laser Printers. For now, be patient and watch this RT for news.

<[Steve] STAPPLIC> 2 questions: Any info on the new ST resolutions and is the TI graphics co-processor being considered for use in the ST. 2) Will Businessland carry the Mega as reported?

<NHARRIS> Sorry Steve, nothing to announce at this time. And we're talking to several chains, but, again, we're not ready to announce any deals at this time.

<[JimbobAtari] JTITTSLER> We have not announced any new resolutions for the "ST" computer. And we are certainly considering what the state of the art is in graphics coprocessors... whether it is from TI, Intel, or a small company called Atari.

<[Darin] D.L.DELEGAL> Any news on the 32bit unit(s)? And will they run Unix or the like

<NHARRIS> Come on folks, ask something we can answer!!! We're not really able to comment on unannounced systems.

<JEFFWILLIAMS> Does Atari plan to market the Mega series exclusively through retail stores...not thru mail order?

<NHARRIS> Yes, absolutely. We will enforce that rigidly.

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> It would be hard to imagine a mail order outfit supporting the Mega well.

<[Tom] T.BELLUCCO> Well, Jeff kinda asked my question...I was going to ask if

we were going to see the Megas advertised for \$999 at Mail Order Plus in a year or 2! That will be prevented???

<NHARRIS> I sure hope we do not. Julius, how about in Canada?

<[Julius] J.OKLAMCAK> Some one asked about how the US is going to handle Mega's and Laser's regarding dealers. Here in Canada, if a dealer wishes to carry the Mega and/or Laser Printer, one of the requirements is that that have an outbound sales force, i.e. someone selling the system or systems to small business - not just watching people come in off of the street. With this marketing strategy we believe that the dealers will take a greater interest in business. We are also looking at VAR (Value Added Resellers) into markets such as Desktop Publishing, CAD, point of sales systems and so on. Phew! That's it for now Neil.

<NHARRIS> The requirements in the USA are still being finalized, but outbound sales force is one of the criteria here as well.

<[Tom] T.BELLUCCO> Is the blitter upgrade still a motherboard swap, and will that motherboard be expandable to 4 meg?

<NHARRIS> Was hoping to hear some engineers responding to this one, but looks like they're not talking. Have to pass on that one.

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> I'm not sure. I haven't heard a final verdict on all that.

<NHARRIS> Tom, the Service Dept. wants the upgrade to be a

motherboard swap because they don't like the idea of dealers doing heavy soldering to the motherboard. Not sure what the final outcome is.

<[Elrod] R.ROLLINS> 1) What about 1 Meg Mega, 2) Tell us 'bout the AMY chip. Thanks

<NHARRIS> Looks like there will be no 1-meg Mega and AMY is still being worked on with nothing new to report.

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> Any isn't finished, I know that much. :-)

<J.WIMMER> Will we as dealers be kept 'up to date' on advanced information via newsletters in the future? We have not been to date. And 2) since we had no problem passing the requirements for 1040 sales i.e. test equip, personnel, etc., will we, after having been in business over a year and a half, be more likely to carry the megas? We can support the maintenance aspect - no problem.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

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<NHARRIS> The newsletter is in the process of being revamped so we can get you informed as much as possible. Since the full list of requirements is not yet settled, I really can't answer that fully. Certainly you have a leg up.

<J.VANRIPER> ATs can be upgraded to 12 megahertz, can the ST be upgraded to 12 Megahertz 68000's?

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> No. The ST can not directly use a 12 MHz 68000. The bus/video timing is very carefully tied together to get the most we could out of the 68K bus.

<J.VANRIPER> What about 68801?

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> Using a faster processor would still not give you any faster access to the system memory bus because of video accesses. The 68801 does not connect "seamlessly" (to use Mark Jansen's word) to the 68000 processor. It is intended for use as a coprocessor on the 68020. It can be used as a peripheral, and we in fact have demonstrated that on an expansion card for the MegaST bus, but it is not just blazingly fast. Faster than software, definitely, but not orders of magnitude.

<(Log. Choice) B.HERDON> 1 question : are 1040STFM's now being shipped in the U.S.?

<NHARRIS> That's a tough one. There really is no 1040STFM as a product. There were a couple made for a special event, and a few leaked out. No more coming.

<[Paul] HITECH> A comment and a question. First I applaud Julius's ideas about getting into business. The current Atari dealers are NOT familiar with the proper procedures to use to sell to business customers. Hopefully, you at Atari are full of good ideas to help them. Now the question. When will the Megas be shipping?? (two weeks?)

<NHARRIS> We're well aware that this market requires a lot more support for dealers. That support will be provided, including training and information. And we're counting on the help of companies like yours, Paul, with applications and also to help in education.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> The Mega STs are shipping, at least to Europe. I was very pleased to see a note on Usenet this morning from Simon Poole (of UNITERM fame) that said that one of the dealers in Switzerland had sold something like 10 Mega4's in his first 8 hours.

<NHARRIS> Can't exactly say when we'll have them out in the US. Imminent.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> I am sure you will be seeing them around here soon.

<[Julius] J.OKLAMCAK> And Canada got it's first batch of machines.

<[Andy Eddy] KIDX> What software, on the entertainment front, can we expect from Atari in the near future (particularly, 8-bit fare).

<[Darryl@ATARI] DMAY> Well ST BattleZone is out, and the 8-bit version is being worked on, plus many more titles for the 8-bit side including some old and new titles.

<NHARRIS> The XE Game System is providing the motivation to get lots of 8-bit games going. Most of them were out on disk before and are now being converted to cart. But some were never available for the 8-bit Ataris before, like Gato.

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> It's also the easiest game system to develop new software for.

<N.CLEVELAND> I would like to ask 2 questions. First, about the Mega ST, I personally like the thought of Atari creating this computer, but how hard will it be for consulting firms, such as mine, to sell if I don't have a "TRUE" walk-in area? And second, what is Atari's strategy for Christmas?

<NHARRIS> Without a store front, you can still qualify as a VAR, but not as a dealer. There will be a different set of requirements for VARs. For Christmas, we plan to sell lots and lots of systems! (grin)

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> I like that plan.

<NHARRIS> Seriously, we're working with our advertising folks and making some interesting plans. You'll be happy.

<[Nevin] N.SHALIT> Now that WordPerfect is almost out, is Atari aware of or helping any other big name and powerful software developers for the ST? I love my hardware but have to use my MagicSAC or PCditto when I want to use powerful software. I don't need a mega ST. I need better software and am willing to pay. I know Atari is Hardware but you should help for better software. Thanks.

<[Julius] J.OKLAMCAK> Nevin, we are "working on it" (big grin)

<NHARRIS> A tall order. One of the charter's of the software group, headed by Sig Hartmann, is to get the software done that we need. One of his weapons is the hardware and another is the kind of marketing program we're doing. When we see a need for a certain kind of program, he will go and make it happen.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> But actually Nevin, if you think about it, by producing hardware that is viewed as more powerful by the marketplace (i.e. the MEGA series), there is also more marketplace incentive for the "big name" companies of which you speak to "join" us.

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<[SSteve] STAPPLIC> Can memory chips just be plugged into the Mega 2 to make it a Mega 4?

<NHARRIS> SSteve, there seems to be some controversy over that right now. We've been told 2 different things by the manufacturing folks. So we'll defer the answer on that one for now.

<[SSteve] STAPPLIC> Is there an expected price on the blitter board swap if it is the way to upgrade?

<NHARRIS> The blitter upgrade should be around \$120.

<[Mark] MFARRAR> Two questions. 1) How much more Support does a MEGA need over a ST? And 2) Is any word available on networking the MEGA's yet? Thanks.

<NHARRIS> For 2 -- we're working hard on several networking options - hope to have something to announce ASAP. On 1, hard to answer. It's not so much the raw hardware, but the kind of market we're looking into. We want the business audience to feel 100% comfortable. Service is a major issue here.

<BEERYSBIT> I was just curious. Are we talking two weeks, 30 days, 60 days? Just some sort of approximate number for U.S. MEGAS. Also, when can my development team get the pin outs for the mega expansion bus?

<NHARRIS> Certainly within 60 days for retail. Systems for developers arrive any day, if not here already -- you need to go through Sig's department (Cindy Claveran, actually). Bus docs should be out at any moment.

<Jimbo@Atari1 JTITSLER> The MEGA ST expansion document is being revised THIS week. (Sigh) The only thing the documentation is going to tell you about really is the mechanical and electrical specifications of the expansion cards. The signals are nothing more than a 68000 bus. For example, one company I have been talking to is a VME manufacturer, and since its timing so closely duplicates a 68K bus, they have the technical aspects of the bus design well in hand. We really will release the mechanical details shortly.

<JEFFWILLIAMS> Do you see Atari coming out with Atari-brand expansions/upgrades to bring stock 520/1040 ST's up to similar physical configurations as the Megas? (memory, clocks, card cage, etc.)

<NHARRIS> I doubt very much that Atari will get into that end of the business. It's easy enough for 3rd parties, and we have a full plate of products/projects.

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> There are third party companies who have brought that sort of things out, like separate keyboard, etc.

<[Luther] REDSTAR> Three questions: 1) Will there be any plans for MEGAs with \_2\_ built in drives?

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> There is little room in the case.

<[Luther] REDSTAR> 2) Will Atari be extensively advertising the MEGAs on TV? 3) Wouldn't it be a good idea to lower the price of the developer's kit in order to motivate more programmers?

<NHARRIS> How many business computers do you see on TV right now? It's a possibility, but our thinking right now is to advertise in print. That's where companies like Apple, Compaq, Leading Edge, etc., are having impact. Look for us in places like the Wall Street Journal. And personally, I don't think that lowering the devkit price helps to get commercial-grade software out there. If the programmer hasn't got enough capital for the kit at \$300, it is hard to believe they can get a product to market.

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> Ours is already easier (and cheaper) to get. Many companies require a full business plan, etc. before allowing anyone to even so much as touch one of their devkits.

<[Mark] SUPRATECH> When will Atari release docs on producing GDOS printer drivers?

<NHARRIS> Jim, Mark, or Cary, you know the answer to that one?

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> Not sure exactly.

<NHARRIS> No idea, sorry. It's not easy to produce a driver.

<C.DESCHAMPS> I have 2 questions. Coprocessors and the Mega (like the Apple MacII) - will the Mega evolution take a similar route?

<[Jimbo@Atari1 JTITSLER]> I am not sure C. It is certainly easier when you have access to the system bus the way you do in the MEGA series. Atari has not announced any plans to provide such a "second computer on a board" products.

<[Julius1 J.OKLAMCAK]> ...but that doesn't stop 3rd party from doing it!

<C.DESCHAMPS> Question 2- if this is easier then does this mean that second video formats with 500 plus colors and resolutions approaching pro levels will become a reality?

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> Anyone could do pretty much whatever they want on a card.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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**GFA Vector**  
By: Blake Arnold - 1BLAKE on Delphi

=====

In case you haven't heard of it yet, GFA Vector is a new utility that allows you to create 3 dimensional vector graphics for use with GFA Basic. It contains a machine language module with all the routines for manipulating the vector objects, and an editor for the actual design of the shapes, along with a few other files that tie everything together in your final GFA Basic program.

The object editor has two modes for entering objects: by points/lines and graphically. By points/lines can be useful for simple objects such as cubes or pyramids, but more complex shapes will probably require that you use the graphic editor. The graphic editor shows you three views of the object that you are currently working with: front, top, and left. I found the graphic editor a little awkward to use at first, but after following the tutorial in the manual for a few minutes, it became clear how the editor was working. From then on it was simple to get the results that I wanted. It is also possible to mix editing modes by creating an object with one editor and modify it with the other (i.e. create an object by points, and edit it graphically), to remove and points lines that were accidentally placed, for example.

Unfortunately there is no "undo" function for the graphic editor; you must go up to the "Points" or "Lines" menu and remove the last entry manually (Not to tough to do, but an "Undo" would have been nice!). The graphic editor is best used in high resolution, but medium resolution will suffice. The graphic editor will not run in low resolution, but shapes created with it, or by point entries, may be used in ANY resolution, low resolution included. Saving an object results in a 10K (roughly) data file that GFA Basic will load when your program is run. This data file may contain up to 32 objects, 1024 points, and 1024 lines.

The machine language subroutine supplied with GFA Vector adds the commands necessary to display/move the object. Commands are included to scale the object, rotate it, color it, etc. As is implied, the routines are in machine language and the movement is relatively fast and smooth. The initialization file (INITIAL.LST) for these routines must be merged into any GFA Basic program that will call the machine language subroutines. It is a short file, and won't add very much to the program length.

The manual that comes with GFA Vector explains the editor, program setup, and object manipulation commands (that are called from GFA Basic) well, but over 1/3 of the manual contains advertisements for other MichTron software packages. I would have rather them place a catalog of their software in the package, and devote ALL the manual's pages to a more detailed explanation of the object manipulation

commands.

GFA Vector should not be thought of as a complete program, but rather an extension tool for GFA Basic. It will allow you to create 3 dimensional vector objects, and gives GFA Basic the capability to smoothly animate them. If that's what you're looking for, GFA Vector might be what you need.

=====

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An article for the  
Newsletter

## BASIC XL

by Dr. Warren G. Lieuallen

Reprinted from Fuji Facts, the newsletter of the Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus

At one point or another, most Atari owners end up delving into Atari BASIC for the purpose of writing a program to accomplish a certain task. Some of them become quite good, almost professional, while others barely get past the first few chapters of whichever book they happened to pick up.

There is another dialect of Atari BASIC, available from OSS, Inc., called BASIC XL. This version is specifically for the 800 XL computer; another modification called BASIC XE is available for the 130XE. As has been stated in reviews in several of the popular magazines, BASIC XL is the language which should have been built into our machines in the first place. Why such high praise? Read on and see.

As a program, and the programmer with it, develops, certain functions are thought of as an entire subroutine, rather than the individual commands. In Atari BASIC, there are a number of instances where to accomplish what seems like a simple operation requires a subroutine composed of several lines of complicated and confusing code. BASIC XL solves this problem, mostly by expanding the number and range of available commands.

Ever tried to use player/missile graphics? I did, once. Although there are several good sources for learning how to correctly set all the memory locations, and appropriately use the players and missiles, it is overly disorganized and "user-unfriendly." In BASIC XL, however, there are extra commands to take all the work out of it, such as: PMGRAPHICS to automatically perform all of the mystic POKE's required, and set aside the necessary memory space; PMMOVE to easily move the player to any desired location (and quickly, too), which is a programming feat unto itself in Atari BASIC; and others, such as MOVE, or BGET to simplify the definition of the shape of the player, and BUMP to detect collisions.

Related to the use of player/missiles is the use of the joysticks. While the series of numbers needed in Atari BASIC to determine the position of the joystick aren't that bad, wouldn't it be simpler to just use a command like IF MSTICK=1, or IF VSTICK=0? There is also built-in support of the light pen via the PEN() command.

Tired of typing all of those line numbers (and often making mistakes along the way)? BASIC XL will automatically generate the line numbers for you, as well as providing other commands to renumber part or all of the program. Defined blocks of the program can also be deleted, which can be a real time-saver.

Going crazy trying to format your screen output correctly and aesthetically? BASIC XL supports the powerful PRINT USING command, with which pre-defined "masks" are used to

characterize the type of printing to be done. A wide variety of both numeric and string definitions are possible, again allowing for maximum flexibility. A full-featured TAB command is also provided, adding to the usefulness of this system.

How about those frequent needs to return to DOS for a little disk maintenance? Many of the DOS commands are included as BASIC statements, including: RENAME, PROTECT and UNPROTECT, DIR, and ERASE (Delete). Now there's no reason to bother with MEM.SAV, and you don't have to worry about saving your creation every time you exit to DOS, because now you won't have to exit nearly as much.

And let's not forget the feeling of frustration when we realize that our masterpiece contains at least one bug (and almost always more!). Debugging is never pleasant, but with BASIC XL, it's less painful. Commands such as TRACE, to trace the program's path through the execution of each and every line allows specific localization of errors. (By the way, the error messages are in English, rather than the cryptic "ERROR B3.") In addition, the LVAR command will produce a list of all the variables used in a program, and the lines where each variable is used. This command alone has been sold as a complete debugging utility program. If that weren't enough, the listings produced are also easier to read, due to indentation of structured statements such as FOR/NEXT, or IF...ELSE...ENDIF.

There are many more commands in BASIC XL which make programming more enjoyable and understandable. But there are two more features which I would like to mention, which deal less with programming, and more with using programs.

Unlike some other supplementary BASIC's for the Atari, BASIC XL is compatible with Atari BASIC. So all of the programs which you already are using will run under BASIC XL. There is even a specific command to insure this compatibility. So, the programs which you currently have can be used and improved easily.

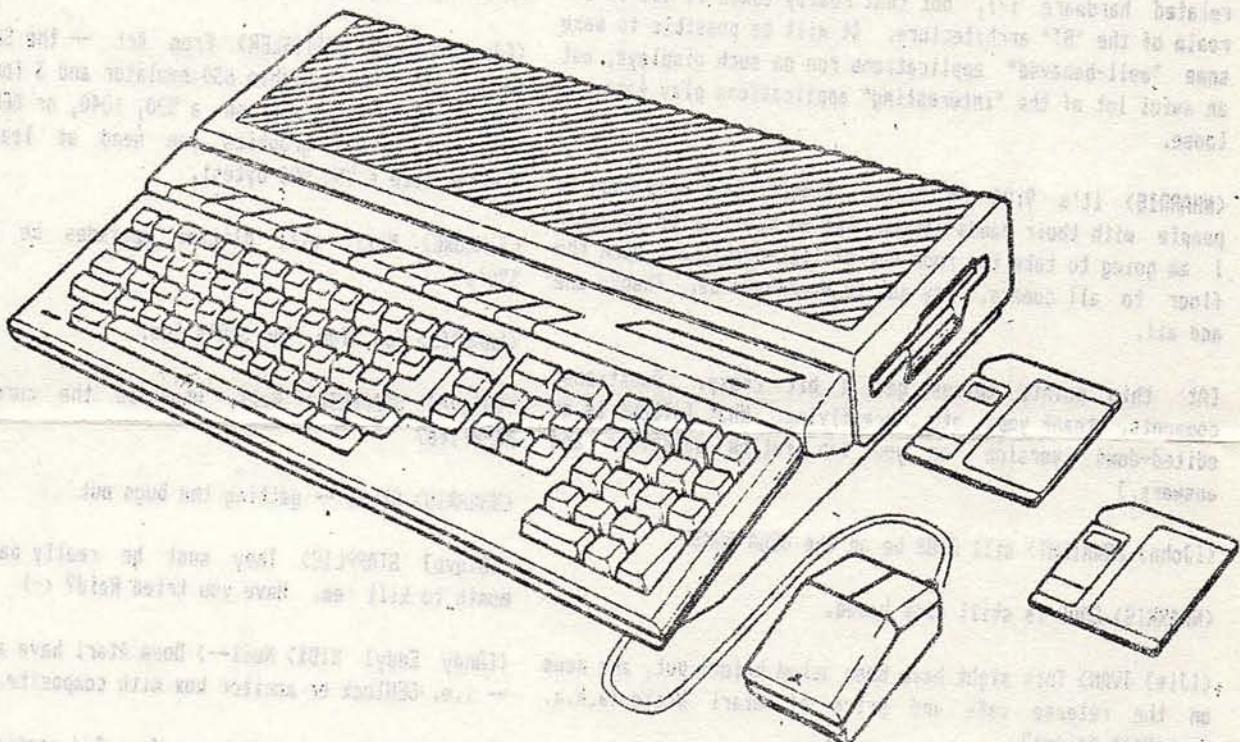
The final feature which I would like to present is one of the more exciting. There is a command which seems rather bland on the surface, but which is surprisingly valuable. This command is FAST. As you might guess, it acts to speed up the running of BASIC XL programs. It does this by "remembering" the location of each line number by doing a quick pre-compilation of the code. What this really means is that each time there is a GOTO, GOSUB or FOR/NEXT statement executed, it is not necessary to start from line 1 and search all the way through to the finish, thereby cutting the time required to execute all GOSUBs and GOTOs to a bare minimum. This feature, combined with all the others, makes BASIC XL an excellent value and a "must" for anyone interested in serious BASIC programming.

## FACT SHEET

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Atari Corporation Speaks!

6th Atari ST Roundtable: Formal Conference of 8/5/87

(Continued from Page 10)

<C.DESCHAMPS> But will atari encourage this type of 3rd party development?

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> It would be silly to discourage it.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> Well, we certainly have talked to people that want to add in graphics displays (and some related hardware :-), but that really takes it out of the realm of the "ST" architecture. It will be possible to make some "well-behaved" applications run on such displays, but an awful lot of the "interesting" applications play fast and loose.

<NHARRIS> it's 9:00 PM here. I still have more than 10 people with their hands raised, but we can't go on forever. I am going to take the room out of listen-only and open the floor to all comers. Try not to overwhelm us. Thanks one and all.

[At this point, things get a bit crazy. Questions, comments, thank yous, etc., are flying. What follows is an edited-down version so you can follow questions and answers.]

<[John] JRWRIGHT> Will GDOS be on the MEGA ROMS?

<NHARRIS> GDOS is still disk based.

<[Jim] JVAN> This might have been asked before but, any news on the release date and price of Atari Write (a.k.a. MicroSoft Write)?

<NHARRIS> Microsoft Write is still in the works.

<SEO> What kind of I/O ports will the Mega have

<NHARRIS> Mega ports are same as current ST, plus expansion bus (internal)

<SEO> One RS232, that's all?

<[Mark & Cary] MJANSEN> Right, SEO.

<SEO> Why limit it to one single RS 232 Port?

<NHARRIS> SEO -- people can always add more on a board

<BOBBRODIE> Neil, any additional hardware planned, like a scanner perhaps??

<NHARRIS> No scanner from us, others have them.

<[Darryl@ATARI] DMAY> Navrone already has a nice scanner.

<ERGADELER> Neil, does your new marketing plan exclude the small dealers, who have supported you thus far, from selling the Megas to their established clients?

<NHARRIS> We don't exclude any current dealers per se, but to go after the business market, some will have to improve or be left behind.

<J.VOGH> Can the Mega ST bus be brought out of a 520 with a solderless board?

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> I don't think you could manage a solderless MEGA bus on the 520.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> From Art -- the SLM804 will be packed out with a Diablo 630 emulator and 3 fonts (many type sizes) that will run on a 520, 1040, or MEGA ST ... for full-page bitmap graphics you need at least 1.5 mbyte. (letter-size = 950,000 bytes).

<T.MOORE> Neil, will blitter upgrades be available for 520's?

<NHARRIS> Yes, Tom, for 520's too.

<[Steve] STAPPLIC> Neil, what is the current snag with MS-Write?

<NHARRIS> Steve -- getting the bugs out

<[Steve] STAPPLIC> They must be really bad bugs. Taking month to kill 'em. Have you tried Raid? :-)

<[Andy Eddy] KIDX> Neil -- Does Atari have any video plans -- i.e. GENlock or monitor box with composite out?

<NHARRIS> Andy -- not from us, from 3rd parties

<[Nevin] N.SHALIT> Monitor Box is finished according to Les, the developer.

<[Darryl@ATARI] DMAY> A outside company is working on a GENLOCK unit.

<[Andy Eddy] KIDX> Whose monitor box?? Who is working on GENlock?

<[Darryl@ATARI] DMAY> Both here in the states and in England.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> And Print-Teknik (in Austria) claims to have GENLock working on the ST.

<[Darryl@ATARI] DMAY> The company working on the GenLOCK is waiting for the MEAGAs.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> Oh... well you might leave some note in the Michtron area. I think at one point they were doing some US distribution for Print-Teknik, but I have not been keeping score.

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> The hardware PC emulator is still under development. It will always end up costing more than a purely software solution, but hopefully, the performance will make up for it :-). It will have to be for the hard core PC'er since, from what I am hearing, the software solution meets a lot of needs.

<[Andy Eddy] KIDX> Any pricing trend for the PC emulator, Jim??

<[Jimbo@Atari] JTITTSLER> I think I better not say too much about unannounced PC projects, whether or not they may exist.



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### AUGUST MINUTES

The August 1987 meeting of the SCAT Atari users group was called to order by vice president Ken Reid at 11:20 A.M. Saturday, August 1, 1987 at the Carol Stream Library.

The meeting opened with announcing the officers and description of club activities. Our president, Jeff Williaes could not make the meeting, so vice president Ken Reid chaired the meeting's activities.

The majority of the meeting consisted of demos for both the 8-bits and the ST. First, John Semenek demonstrated the game ST Shuffleboard, which uses the mouse to control the game action; for those of you who can't wait to play on the cruise ship. Following, Nick from the Alien Atari users group demonstrated a public domain publishing program. The program is available on Genie, or any of the other local bulletin boards.

To close the meeting, Mike Yocum demonstrated some programs written by David Addison. Mike showed one of the best Addison games, Monopoly. The programs are compiled GFA basic and are available in the public domain library.

The meeting adjourned at about 1:30 P.M.



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## The Writer's Tool

by Dr. Warren G. Lieuallen

Reprinted from Fuji Facts, the newsletter of the Atari Computer Enthusiasts of Columbus

The Writer's Tool, by OSS, Inc. is one of the newer word processors available for the 8-bit Atari computers, and luckily is also one of the better ones. The program is supplied in two parts, a ROM cartridge and a floppy disk, and also includes exhaustive documentation (tutorial, reference guide, and a quick reference card), bound in a classy yellow binder.

The Writer's Tool functions through a variety of menu and sub-menu systems, which include Search, Disk I/O, Print, and several External Functions. Many of these system menus are very easy to use, and contain important information about the program and the text file being edited, such as number of words, total length in bytes, cursor location, printing format values, etc.

When booted on an unmodified Atari 800 XL, the program leaves 23,219 free bytes in RAM. This is the equivalent of nearly 15.5 double-spaced pages. Text entry is very similar to any word processor program -- you simply enter the text from the keyboard, and let the computer worry about margins, spacing and the like. Both "typeover" and "insert" text entry modes are supported, with different cursors so each can be easily distinguished. Numerous text formatting commands are available, such as: automatic line centering, hard spaces and soft hyphens, headers and footers, margin justification, etc. Other printer specific features include: italics, bold-face, underlining, double-width printing, sub- and super-scripts, and more. One nice feature is the inclusion of "triple-printing" for sub- and superscripts, in which the characters are printed full size, and either lowered or raised one-half line. This may not sound like much, but no other program that I am aware of does it, and it really does look nice on the printed page.

Many of The Writer's Tool's printing commands take some getting used to, as they are distinctly different from other word processors you may be familiar with. This is not necessarily bad, just different. First of all, there is no direct way to control the top and bottom margins; headers and footers containing blank lines must be used to leave some "white space." Secondly, The Writer's Tool will begin and end printing wherever the printer happens to be on the page; page ejects must always be forced at the end of the document, and the paper alignment is slightly more crucial at the start of a document. However, these differences are quickly accommodated (and will not be noticed at all if The Writer's Tool is your first word processor), and should not hamper anyone in the use of this program.

Perhaps more importantly, the print preview function is present, but somewhat limited. Activated by a command from the Print System menu, only the left 38 columns are visible, with no screen scrolling available. While still useful to judge placement of material on the printed page, this feature is more limited than in other programs.

Although not mentioned in the documentation, an added bonus is the ability to include graphics within the body of your text. With a special "link-printing" command, any file(s) with the extender ".666" will be included byte-for-byte as graphics data, if your printer can handle it. Although not included with my copy of the program, a graphics driver to convert graphic files from Koala Pad, Touch Tablet, B/GRAPH, etc. is now available from OSS. Unlike some other programs, by including one byte to tell The Writer's Tool the size of your graphic, the page formatting will not be disturbed, and multiple graphics may be included anywhere within your text, with no additional modifications required!

One of the External Functions available is the spelling checker. This feature alone make The Writer's Tool a stand-out word processor. The spelling checker, which includes a 20,000 word dictionary, is one of the slickest I've seen. It begins by first alphabetizing your text file, and then searches through the dictionary. This process eliminates looking up repetitions of the same word, and greatly decreases the amount of disk access, since everything is alphabetized. Many options are available to add to the dictionary by creating your own personalized dictionary, mostly through a separate External Function called, appropriately enough, Dictionary Management.

A "Mail-Merge" feature is also available, which accesses the mini-Data Base included with The Writer's Tool! Multiple fields and records are easily created and edited to serve a variety of needs.

There are still lots of features to The Writer's Tool -- this is one of the more powerful word processors available for the Atari Computer Systems.

S-C-A-T  
Suburban Chicago Atarians  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Dues for SCAT are \$15.00 a year per family. Additional membership cards are available for \$1.00 each. To join, just fill out this questionnaire and bring it to the next meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you can send it to: SCAT, P.O. Box 72266, Roselle, IL 60172.

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**8-BIT:**  
Number of computers \_\_\_\_ Model \_\_\_\_ Memory \_\_\_\_ K  
Modified? \_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_  
Number of Disk Drives \_\_\_\_ Brand(s): \_\_\_\_  
Density \_\_\_\_ Modified? \_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_  
ATR? \_\_\_\_ Configuration \_\_\_\_  
Cassette \_\_\_\_ Modem (Brand) \_\_\_\_ Interface \_\_\_\_  
Printer (Brand) \_\_\_\_ Interface \_\_\_\_

**16-BIT:**  
Number of computers \_\_\_\_ Model \_\_\_\_ Memory \_\_\_\_ K  
Modified? \_\_\_\_ How? \_\_\_\_  
Number of Floppy Disk Drives \_\_\_\_ Model(s) \_\_\_\_  
Hard Disk? \_\_\_\_ Size \_\_\_\_ MEG  
Modem (Brand) \_\_\_\_ Printer (Brand) \_\_\_\_

Programming: Check the programming languages you use  
None \_\_\_\_ Action! \_\_\_\_ Basic \_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_ Cobol \_\_\_\_  
Forth \_\_\_\_ Fortran \_\_\_\_ Logo \_\_\_\_ Modula2 \_\_\_\_ Pascal \_\_\_\_  
Pilot \_\_\_\_ Prolog \_\_\_\_ RPG \_\_\_\_ Other(s) \_\_\_\_

Pay Telecom Systems: Check if you use the service  
American People Link \_\_\_\_ CompuServe \_\_\_\_ Delphi \_\_\_\_ Source \_\_\_\_  
Games Computer Play \_\_\_\_ TCS \_\_\_\_  
Other pay service (please specify) \_\_\_\_

Do you own another brand of personal computer? \_\_\_\_  
If so, which? \_\_\_\_

NOTICES

SCAT general meetings are held on the first Saturday of each month at 11:00am. See the calendar for dates. The summer location is the Roselle Library on Park St., just south of Irving Park Rd. (Rt. 19).

The Beginner's SIG meets at the College of DuPage at 10:00am (one hour before the regular meeting). [Chairmen: Tom Bartelt 637-5379 & Dan Hirschfeld 966-7187]

The ST SIG meets around the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. See the calendar for the exact dates. All meetings are at the Roselle Public Library, Park Ave., Roselle, IL. [Chairman: Mike Yocum 469-4490]

The MIDI SIG meets on the third Thursday of each month at Cos Computers, 3705 N. Southport, Chicago, IL. [Chairman Greg La Brec 425-2085]

The schedule and location of meetings are subject to change so be sure to look in the most recent newsletter for the correct date.

The deadline for submission of material or advertising copy for the newsletter is the 10th of the prior month. All material received after that date will be considered for inclusion in a future issue.

The SCAT Newsletter is a publication of the Suburban Chicago Atarians. Any comments or questions should be addressed to SCAT via P.O. Box 72266, Roselle, IL 60172. Or call any of the following officers:

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**September 1987**



**October 1987**



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